RETURNEE EXPERIENCES OF A RETURN TO PRACTICE PROGRAMME

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Maggie Coates & Ann Macfadyen, Northumbria University, Newcastle

RESEARCH FOCUS & BACKGROUND

"We are all trying to get out and you are coming back—you are an absolute fool"……

- Research of ***lived experience*** of nursing, midwifery and allied health returnees from a university Return to Practice programme (RTPP)
- UK RTP literature focused on programme provision, or used case studies as part of recruitment drives, rather than exploring returnee experience through research

RTP OVERVIEW

CONTEXT

Why were nurses leaving in the first instance?? (House of Commons Health Select Committee (HCHC), 2018 RCN, 2020)

"*nurses were 'feeling pressured around morale, standards and retention' (*HCHC, 2018: 4)

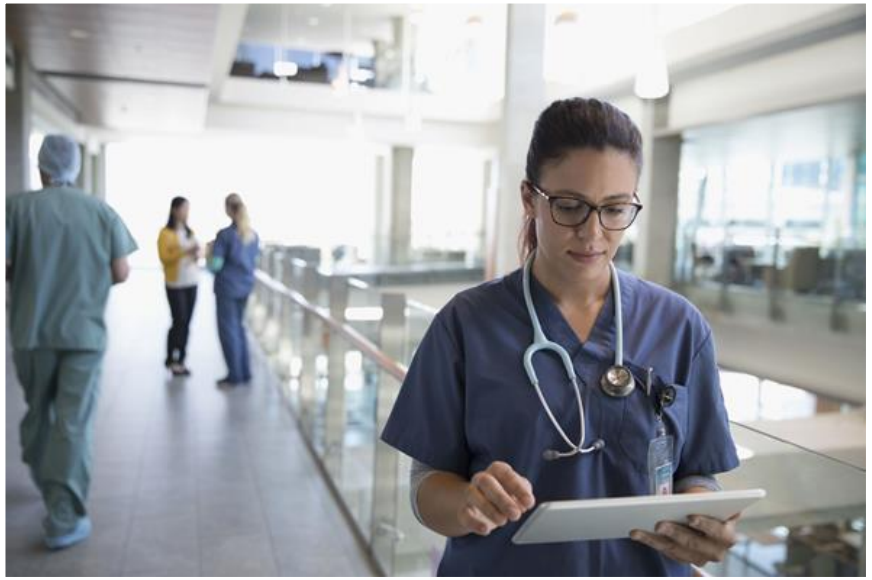
England vacancies 2018?

36,000 nursing across all specialities

33,000 filled by agency or bank agency or bank mainly AN (HCHC, 2018)

2019: Leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, around 40,000 nursing vacancies existed in the NHS in England (RCN, 2020).

CONTEXT



Up to 1/3 of all healthcare staff considered leaving their profession between 2019 and 2020 (RCN, 2020)

The UK's political responses to nursing shortages is the development of NA & apprenticeships, aimed at addressing rising numbers of nurses leaving rather than joining (Buchan et al, 2019)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What do returnees expect RTP to be like & how does this compare with their actual experience?

2. What are returnees' perceptions about how they are perceived and received in clinical practice during the programme?

3. What do returnees view as valuable key personal & professional characteristics, about themselves & others & how does this influence their experience ?

ETHICS

MOST DEFINATELY

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

- The research adopted a qualitative, exploratory approach designed to focus on interpreting returnees' lived experiences
- 3 x focus groups were used to collect data, convened in university & around timetable. Only researcher & returnees present
- A focus group schedule, pilot tested for usability, guided the data collection, open, probing questions. Returnees encouraged to ***tell their stories***; ***share experiences spontaneously*** & 'bounced off each other'

RECRUITMENT & SAMPLING

- "Purposive sampling from 2 small RTP cohorts 2018
- 12 returnee participants (2 MW, 2 OTs, 1 LD, 7 AN from 28)

DATA ANALYSIS

- FGs recorded & transcribed
- Manual data analysis - Thematic analysis (Green and Thorogood, 2014), offered flexibility, audit trail of analysis for transparency
- 4 four-stage analysis, Stage 1: familiar with data independent listening to recordings, took notes & gained 1st impressions
- Stage 2, independent annotation for repetition
- Stage 3, 153 separate codes, iterative comparison
- Stage 4, emerged as 27 categories, developed themes & sub themes

DATA ANALYSIS

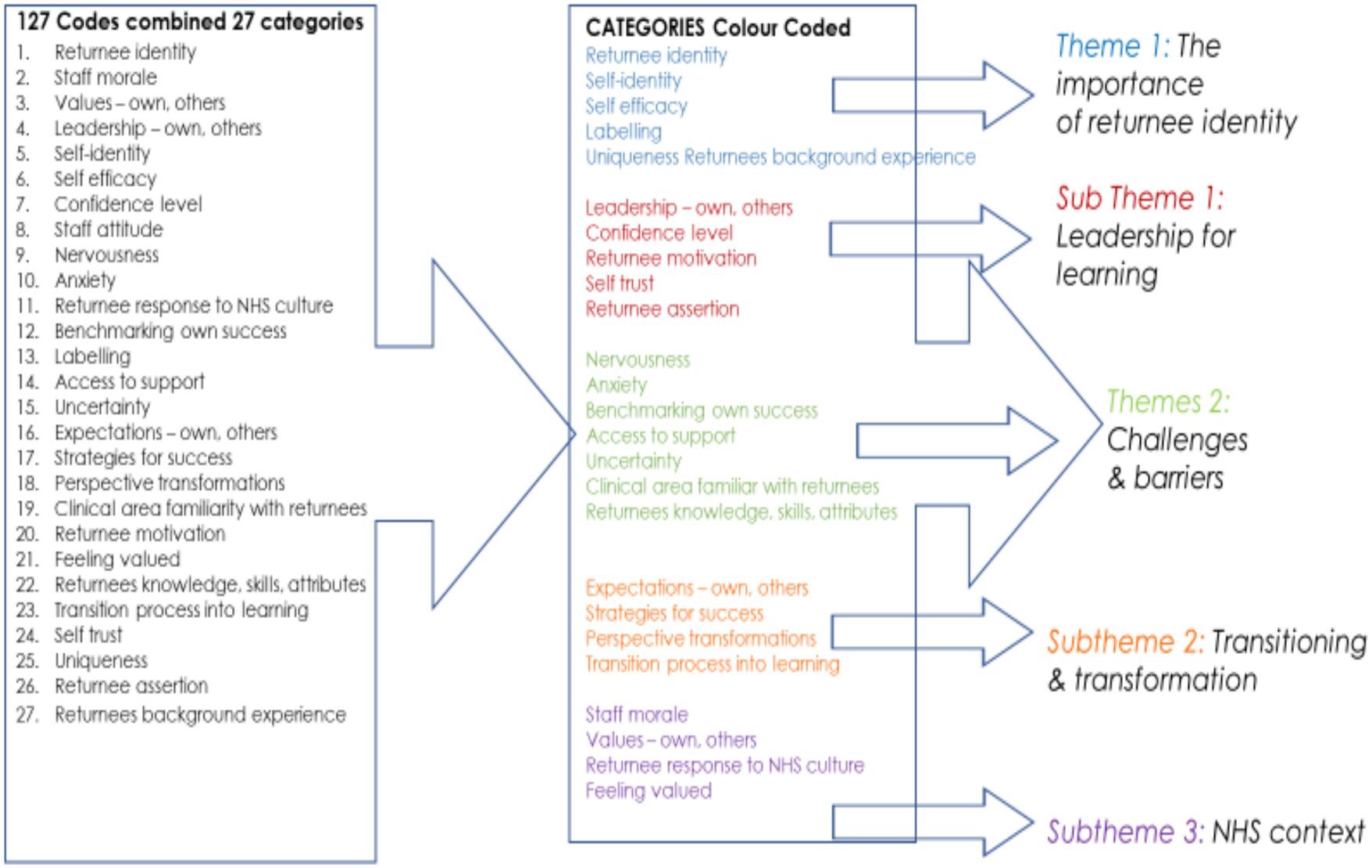
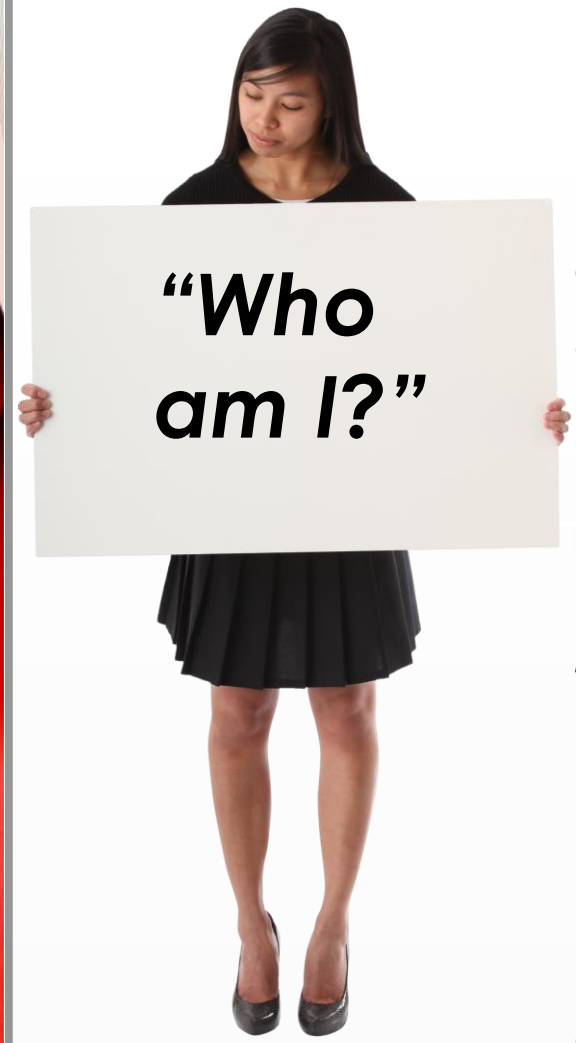


Figure 1: Thematic analysis – Codes, Categories & Themes (Green & Thorogood 2014)

FINDINGS

Theme 1: The importance of returnee identity



"I have been asked many times what are you?"

"its such a challenge because they don't know who we are when we walk on the ward, they don't know what our experiences are, they don't know what box to put us in"

"I am a student, but there is a bit in the middle, that nobody knows about me. We are all different & the PS is struggling with that unknown entity … I think it is a very tricky place to be as a student because you don't know what people's expectations are for yourself"

FINDINGS

Theme 2: Challenges & barriers to learning

Emotional challenges related to performance….

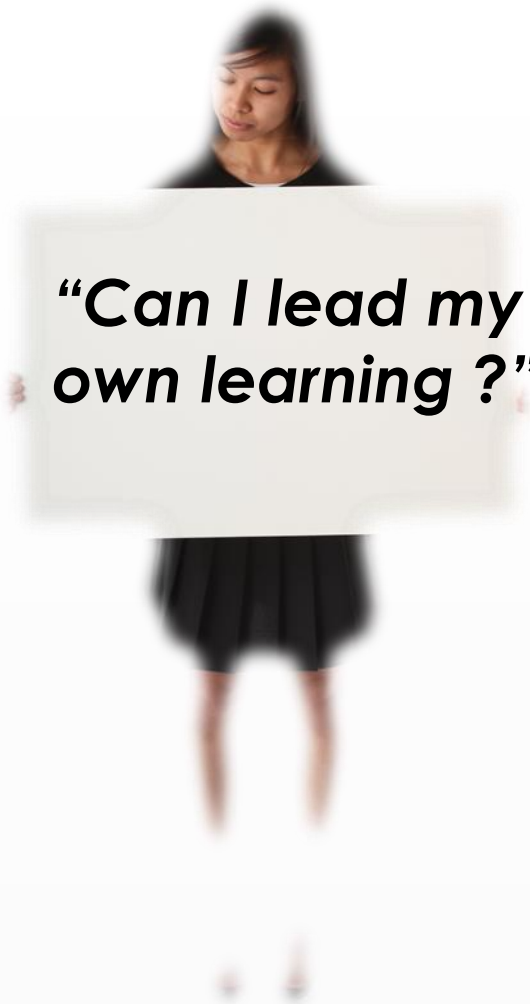
Returnees *"worried" anxious" "terrified" "vulnerable" "scared"*

Inadequate skills when once competent

"I was worried that I would have completely forgotten everything & become so deskilled in all the practical side that I wouldn't be able to do anything in the beginning"

Their motivations were questioned, however, they rationalised this as staff disillusionment

FINDINGS
Subtheme 1: Leadership for learning



"When I went to the ward, I was expecting the worst because I knew everything has changed, but … it has been lovely. I said to my PS "I don't want to do anything at all, I just want to observe for the first two weeks".

"The ward sister made a massive difference, she really was accommodating, she had experience of RTP returnees & that made a huge difference"

FINDINGS
Subtheme 2: Transitioning & transformation

"Once I got in it was like I had never been away….trusting my own knowledge & clinical skills….I am not as far off the mark as I thought I was going to be"

"I did find myself giving positive … and constructive feedback to the PS because I felt that was the only route they got it … in order to get the best … you need to be equal with them ".

"Towards the end … my PS said she had learned so much from me"

FINDINGS
Subtheme 3: Context of the NHS

Negativity portrayal of the NHS had personal impact

'They were taking it really personally … they need to hear that they are good at their job''

DISCUSSION

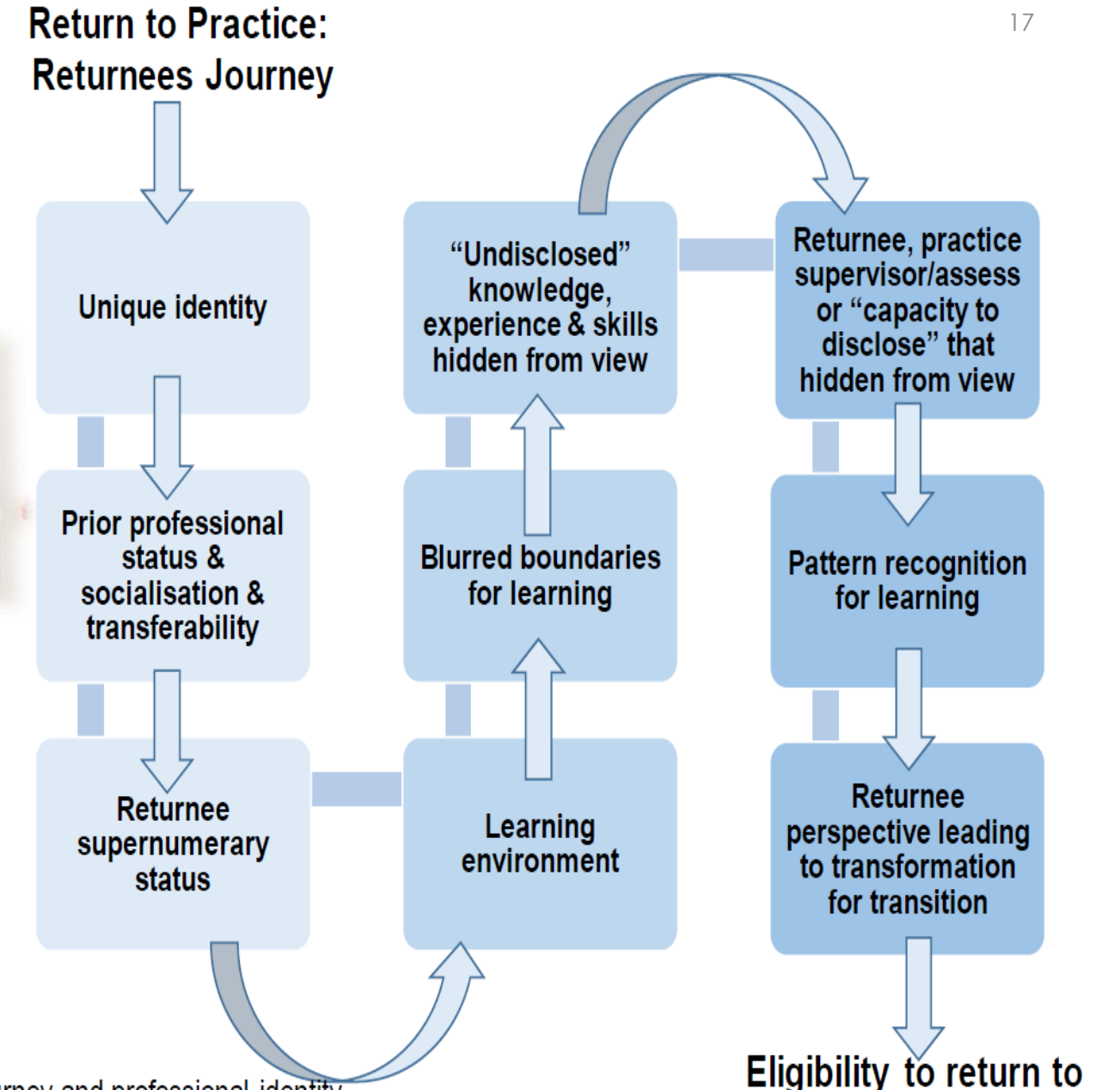


Figure 2: The learning journey and professional identity (Coates & Macfadyen 2021)

DISCUSSION

Returnee identity more complex than first thought & important to returnees

Returnees & clinical staff had difficulty defining professional identity related to returnees because of role ambiguity i.e. familiarity with the meaning of the word student didn't always transcend to returnee….altered perception & pattern recognition

Learning journey was individual & depended on capacity for disclosure of hidden talent which was tangible

Returnees were empathetic to their colleagues

Better where placement areas had experience of returnees

CONCLUSION

Limitations

Small scale study, small cohort, one method, one area so no comparison of other programme areas across the country

Further research into the experiences of returnees

Returnees have a love of nursing/midwifery/AHP, hold many transferable skills & are a valuable asset to the NHS….

"My journey is my journey & yours is yours. I left for reasons & I am coming back for reasons because they are mine & this is what I have chosen to do"